

Stand Strong

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[0 : 00] Ezekiel 22 verse 30. The Lord says, And I sought for a man among them that should make up the hedge and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it.

! But I found none. My message tonight is take a stand. Take a stand. The battle is raging all around us. The truth is under bombardment.

We see so many multiplied false doctrines, false theology, fake churches, false prophets and teachers.

The Lord was looking for a man at this time in Ezekiel 22, a man who would pray, a man who would take a stand, a man who would stand in the gap, who would see the need and stand.

Friends, the need is great still. The need is great now, today. It's ever greater. And there's some gaps, as it were. There's some needs. There's needs for men, needs for women to rise up and stand.

[1 : 01] It's like the gap is wide and getting wider even. In 2 Corinthians 10, 3 through 5, it talks about how, It's like we're in this battle zone, this battle front that is planet Earth and the nation of Australia, this community.

There's a battle raging. There's a battle raging. And it's time for us to take a stand, to take up our spiritual armour and stand. Stand together as a spiritual army. Stand and be available.

Be in the gap. Ready to serve. Ready to work. Stand against the tide. Stand against the flow. Stand for truth in the midst of error. Stand up and be counted.

Listen, this is a wartime. We should be on a wartime footing because we are in a spiritual war. We hear talk lately of Australia and, well, America and Russia and the Ukraine.

And there's a hot spot over there right now. But friends, Australia is a hot spot spiritually. We are under attack. We're already, the enemy of our soul is already attacking the church, attacking believers.

[2 : 27] You and me, we're under attack. So we should rise up as a spiritual army. And not hold back, but hold fast. Some will look at what it will cost us.

What it will cost us to be a part of such an army of God. And some would say the cost is too high. It's going to cost me too much. But we are called to be ready and to stand.

To stand and be spent. As Paul said in 2 Corinthians 12, verse 15. He says, And I will gladly spend and be spent for you. Though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.

The preacher here, the Apostle Paul, was saying, I want to spend and be spent. And I will gladly spend and be spent for you. But even so, it says, The more I love, the less I be loved.

It's like there's many in retreat in these days of spiritual assault. We are called to rise up. Not to hold back, but to stand forward. Not to run and hide, but to stand and fight.

[3 : 30] Paul says, I will spend and be spent for you. Yet as that faithful gospel preacher, he was not always appreciated. For instance, the same for every believer. The preacher is not out to win a popularity contest.

In Galatians 4.16, Paul says, Am I therefore become your enemy? Because I tell you the truth. I've experienced that. When you give someone some hard truths, they can turn.

And people can be vicious towards the preacher. Now sometimes maybe that's needed. Maybe the preacher needs to be told off. But the truth hurts, doesn't it? When we confront it, when we deliver faithfully, there's sometimes those that would bite bad.

And it would be easier to just not say anything. To do nothing, say nothing, be nothing. And many will think that as a Christian, as the everyday believer.

Sometimes it's easier to do nothing. To just let someone else stand in the gap. Many will see the gap and think, someone else can do it. Lord, here am I.

[4 : 34] Send someone else. But God is saying, I've sought for a man who will stand in the gap before me for the land. Think of the land that we live. There's need for men and women to rise up,

to see the spiritual gaps as it were, the need for prayer, the need for intercession, the need to stand before the Lord, to stand for the Lord.

God is looking for such who will stand up, stand for Him. People think it's easier to do nothing. God's looking for men and women who will stand. It says in Hebrews 3, 13, but exhort one another daily, while it is called today.

So that's now, and it will be, when we're in tomorrow, it'll be tomorrow too. It's every day that's called today we're to exhort one another. So we should have that heart that we should encourage one another, exhort one another, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. So exhort one another, it says. And so it's not all about a preacher exhorting the congregation, but the congregation exhorting one another, even more so.

We've got need of exhorters. I used to be in a church that had different kind of ordained ministries. They had ordained ministers, but they also ordained people that they called exhorters.

[5 : 51] I think that's probably not a bad idea. It was an office of a church. We should all be exhorters. Every one of us should really want to be an exhorter because the Bible says exhort one another. So there's a gap.

There's a gap. There's a vacancy here, a job vacancy for exhorters because the Bible says we should exhort one another daily. And lest we be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Many are hardened today. The world would harden us, wouldn't it? As we see in the world that we live, some are hardened because of sin. Many will not stand because of the hardness. Sometimes it can be a hard thing to stand for Christ in the workplace. And it would be easier to find an easier way, a more comfortable way to find a way that's easier on the flesh.

But we must be willing to rise up and even cop some flag, to be willing to bear the marks of our Lord. He was crucified. And we are to die daily as well.

[6 : 49] We are meant to be such that we'll be willing to be hurt, be willing to be misunderstood. Don't shy away from the pathway of pain. Don't be afraid of suffering for Christ to take that difficult path at times.

Fact is, it will be harder for the transgressor, those who are outside of God's will, than for those of us who suffer if it be in God's will. 1 Peter 4.19 it says, Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator. If it be the will of God, there to that we suffer. The Lord will strengthen you who suffer. There's workplaces where it's very hostile to the Gospel. I've been there. There's situations where Christians are mocked and scorned.

It's commonplace, isn't it? But worse than suffering in the will of God is to be in the way of the transgressor. The Bible says the way of the transgressor, the unbeliever, is hard.

It says in Proverbs 13.15, The lost do not have the assurance that we have. When we go through tough times, if we go through suffering, if it be the will of God so, then we have God's comfort and abiding presence.

[8 : 06] We're in God's keeping. It says, Let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well-doing.

So do well and suffer for it and glory to God if it be such. For you that will stand, who will stand or be willing to stand as it were in the spiritual gap, willing to stand, to stand strong for Christ, there's encouragement for you.

There's much against you, but if God before you, then who can really touch you? Who can really be against you? The devil doesn't want you to stand. The devil would rather have you be a mediocre Christian.

The devil wants you to foul up. We need to trust the Lord and resolve to finish strong. Finish strong. In the Word of God, we see examples of men and women of God and there's challenges there. Some didn't always finish strong. Some did not finish strong. One was Solomon. He got off the rails. One of the wisest of the wise, King Solomon.

[9 : 14] He was praised for his wisdom. And yet it says of Solomon that his heart was turned. You have to watch that. That's in 1 Kings 11 verse 4. 1 Kings 11 verse 4 it says, For it came to pass when Solomon was old that his wives turned away his heart after other gods and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God as was the heart of David, his father.

So King Solomon, he started strong, but he had a poor finish. There was a danger there of wrong associations. You've got to be careful who we link arms with, who we follow after.

He obviously married multiple foreign wives, unbelievers, pagan wives, and they turned away his heart after other gods.

King Asa was another one who started well, but he didn't finish so well. So we ought to be guarded about that, not fall for that. The devil wants you not to finish well. But as a Christian, we want to finish well.

We want to finish strong. We want to fight the good fight. We want to finish that course and finish that race course, as it were, that running race, and to finish strong.

[10:25] To break through the ribbon and to be strong in our faith. The devil wants to distract you, to detour you, to cause you to stumble, to foul up, to stop, to crumble.

He wants you to cave in. He would say, count the cost. Yes, count the cost and accept the cost. Finish well. Don't let anything deter you.

When you're hard pressed on every side, you can still stand. Paul recounts in 2 Corinthians 4, verse 7 through 11. It talks about how we have this treasure in earthen vessels.

Just these vessels of earth, these vessels made of different minerals of the ground, as Adam was. We've got this treasure, he says, in earthen vessels. That the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us.

And he goes on to say, we're troubled on every side, yet not distressed. We are perplexed, but not in despair. Persecuted, but not forsaken, cast down, but not destroyed, always bearing about in the body, the dying of the Lord Jesus.

[11:30] That the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. He talks about how we even always deliver unto death for Jesus' sake. That the life also of Jesus may be made manifest in our mortal flesh.

He goes on in 2 Corinthians 7, verses 4 through 6. I'm filled with comfort, I'm exceeding joyful in all our tribulations. So there's times we'll face some tribulations, some troubles.

He says, in Macedonia, our flesh hath no rest. We are troubled on every side. Without we're fighting, within we're fears. Nevertheless, God, that comforted those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus.

So Paul's saying there, and he knew what he was talking about. He says we're not crushed. We're not defeated. We will not be moved. We will face some testing, sure, but our God will comfort us.

Our God will see us through. It's the test that leads to the testimony, isn't it? We have that, when we look back and we think, when we give our account of our faith and testify, we can say, the Lord's led me through this and that, and I'm on the other side of it.

[12:44] The test will be part of our testimony, how God's prevailed and enabled us. And so, how God has brought us through. Because we are more than conquerors. We are overcomers.

And we've got that secret place to go to. So stand, saints. Stand and keep on standing. The Bible speaks about the sacrifices of God as being a blessedness there.

That there's a blessing of standing. And God will show himself strong for you. That stand and began. It says in 2 Chronicles 16, 9, For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him.

And we're going to stand even if it be to stand in the fire. As I touched on earlier today, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, these three men, it says in Daniel 3, verse 23, they fell down bound into the midst of the burning fiery furnace.

Nebuchadnezzar there is looking through the portal and he says, Did not we cast three men into the fire? Three men bound into the midst of the fire?

[13:54] And they answered, True, O King. And he answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire and they have no hurt and the form of the fourth is like the son of God.

When you're in the fire, when you're standing in the fire, when you'll stand and not bow to the idols of the world, he will stand with you in the fire as he did with them.

Thank God, even in the day of adversity, it says, Proverbs 24, 10, if our fate in the day of adversity, our strength is small.

So, when we stand for the Lord, sometimes it will be standing in the day of adversity. Stand and keep on standing.

Give God the glory, seek his help and strength to stay the course. The Bible talks about a time of shaking of Hebrews 12, 26, it says, He will shake not the earth only, but also heaven.

[15 : 00] And he talks about the things which cannot be shaken will remain. And we are in a world that's about to be shaken by the hand of God in judgment. And he'll send that shaking.

But friends, the ones who will stand for Christ, he will give you strength. Many will stumble and tumble, or we can stand fast, even in such a time of testing.

It's been said, the greater the winds, the stronger the tree. And so, when we see believers, and you see the map on the wall there of lands that are hostile to the gospel, and those Christians that rise up and trust Christ, sometimes they're at the risk of their lives are stronger because of that.

So, don't let any shaking or troubles of this world stop you from standing fast. But rather, to steel yourself for the battle. And friends, there's a thing of consistency with standing.

It says, for some, they will only stand when they feel like it, or when it's convenient. It's like the man that Paul reasoned with in Acts 24, verse 25.

[16 : 26] As Paul witnessed to him, it says, Felix trampled. And he says, go thou away for this time, when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee. Some people are like that. When you give them the gospel, when you challenge them about Christian truth, they'll say, oh, it's not convenient.

They actually use that word, don't they, when you knock on their door. It's not convenient. It's not, I'm not available. I'm not, I've got, I'm too busy or this or that. And some will wait and wait for a convenient time to trust the Lord and for believers too.

They might say, oh, it's not convenient for me to be a stronger Christian, to be a more faithful Christian. It's not convenient for me to stand in the gap, to stand for Christ. But the Bible's got this spirit of always.

There's a sense of this word, always. We see that in Luke 18, 1, the Lord says men ought always to pray, ought always to pray and not to faint.

Acts 24, 16, Paul says, I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and towards men. There's a consistency there, a consistency of living by conviction, of living faithfully, to be void of offence towards God and towards men.

[17 : 43] 1 Corinthians 15, 58, Paul talks about how we should be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding, always abounding. That word again, in the work of the Lord.

It says in 2 Corinthians 2, 14, Paul says that God always causes us to triumph in Christ. We have constant victory. There's a consistency of victory.

In 2 Corinthians 9, verse 8, he writes, that God is able to make all grace abound toward you that ye always having all sufficiency in all things may abound to every good work.

There's that sense of always. God is with you always. It says in Galatians 4, 18, it's good to be zealously affected always in good things. So, zeal for God, zeal for Christian truth and Christian living is something we should always have.

We should always have that zeal. Ephesians 5, 20, Paul says giving thanks always for all things. Giving thanks always. And 1 Peter 3, 15, Peter says sanctify the Lord God in your heart and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks of you a reason of the hope that is in you.

[18 : 55] Be always ready to witness. So, just to recap that real quick, always pray, always have that conscience, that clear conscience, always have that abounding to work for Him, always having that triumph in Christ, always having all sufficiency, God will supply, always being zealously affected in a good thing, always giving thanks and always being ready to give an answer, to witness.

So, there's that sense of when you stand, stand consistently, stand firmly, stand fervently, stand persistently. Our standing should be consistent, our loyalty should be undivided, unswayed, unswerving, wholehearted.

Some people will stand, but yet, the shaking or the troubles of life, the testings, unsettled them and they lessen their fervour and they lessen their devotion and they crumble.

but we should stand, we've got to stand. Our Lord tells us multiple times to stand, it's a repeated theme and to repeat what I, a scripture I touched on again this morning, Ecclesiastes 12, remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not.

He says, remember now thy creator. Young man, young woman, the devil wants you to wait before you get serious about God.

[20 : 29] So, you're still young if you're in the 30s and 40s, it's in the 50s, 60s, you know, and if you're older, God's still got a work for you to do.

There's no retirement plan. Young man, young woman, don't wait before you get serious about God. Don't say, I'll stand when I get older, when I'm more wiser.

No, stand now. He says, remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth. Stand now while you're young. Stand now and don't hold back.

Make a determination to stand for Christ and he'll honour them. Young man, young woman, put away childish things. All the things that would get in the way and stand.

Stand strong. So, we see in 1 Chronicles 16, 11, it says, seek the Lord and his strength. Seek his face continually. That theme of always again. Continually seek the Lord.

[21 : 26] Seek to serve. Seek to be in his hands and think, how can I stand more strongly? Stand strong. That's really the theme tonight.

To stand strong. So, do more than you're expected to do. Give more than you're expected to give. Go further than you're expected to go. Be more than you're expected to be.

Don't settle for half measures. Friends, we ought to pull out all the stops. Your gift to God is what you do with your life.

He wants your life to be in his hands. As we've talked in recent times, it's been your living sacrifice. Lay it all on the altar, all of yourself. And don't try to be divided.

The Lord says, you cannot serve two masters. Give your heart, your whole, to the Saviour. Friends, I believe it's an evil day.

[22 : 29] An evil day. The Bible talks about such a time. Ephesians 6.13, it says, Wherefore, take unto you the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day.

and having done all to stand. Having done all to stand. So hear the call of the Master. It's in the evil day. The evil day is the time, the place where we are called to withstand.

There's opposing forces. We've got an enemy, a committed adversary. He's a willful opponent and he's constantly finding ways to find some chink in your armour.

Wherefore, take unto you the whole armour of God. But you may be able to withstand. Have some firmness to that withstanding in the evil day and having done all to stand.

It's like we're on a battle front and we're exhausted. We've used every measure of that spiritual armour, of the weapons of our warfare that are not carnal but are mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.

[23 : 38] Even when you've fought the fight and you're feeling like you've expended all the energy just keep on standing. Keep on standing. We don't let our flag fall as it were in our analogies of a fight, of soldiers in a warfare.

We will stand with the banner held high. We'll stand and keep on standing. Stand fast. Stand fast in the liberty. Stand fast and fight. So friends, that's my plea tonight that we would have that heart and to keep standing and stand stronger, stand taller.

The Bible talks about a growing of our faith, an extending and expanding of ourselves. It says in 1 Thessalonians 3 verse 12 through 13, The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one towards another and toward all men even as we do towards you to the end you may establish your hearts unblameable in love, sorry, in holiness before God, even our Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints.

The plea for Paul to the Thessalonians here is that they may increase and abound. So he doesn't want us to be standing in the sense of stuck but standing in the sense of growing, growing taller, standing stronger, standing taller, standing and keep on standing, standing by the power of God and to be growing stronger, more established, more loving, more increasing, more unblameable. Be someone who is established as in that sense of that increasing and abounding that he calls to establish your hearts. Some are going to be ashamed.

[25 : 28] It talks about some will be ashamed before him and he's coming. What's the opposite of ashamed? I like to think of it as being an approved worker. We can be ashamed but we can be approved of God.

The Bible talks about how we should study to show ourselves. It says 2 Timothy 2.15 Study to show thyself. Approved unto God a workman that needeth not to be ashamed rightly dividing the word of truth.

We ought to aspire to be approved as it were that God's got his stamp of approval that God will say well done. God will be blessed with what we've rendered unto him but we won't be ashamed but we'll be approved.

We'll be blessed. We'll be joyful and assured before him that he's coming not ashamed before him that he's coming. When you stand for the Lord be willing to stand in the minority.

To stand in the minority because really the people of God the record of scripture and church history show that it's only at times a very marginal group it's like a remnant at times isn't it of the people of God down through history they're often the minority.

[26 : 45] So when you stand for Christ don't be ashamed to stand in the minority because one with God is a majority isn't it? Praise God. So my prayer is that we'll be truly that a strong church a grace filled people who'll increase and abound in that love in that faith in that holiness that walk with him.

It says in Psalm 63 verse 3 through 5 it says because thy loving kindness is better than life my lips shall praise thee thus will I bless thee while I live I will lift up my hands in thy name my soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips his loving kindness it says is better than life what more can we have than to have his loving kindness is better than even life itself that we would even be willing to expend our life in the reality even to take our faith to martyrdom because his loving kindness is better than life now some will pray this prayer in church and you might feel like praying it because I've been talking a while and this is how someone has put it how someone might pray tongue in cheek now I sit me down to sleep the sermon is long the subject is deep if he should quit before I wake please someone give me a little shame I hope that's not true tonight that I've rambled too much but hopefully I've touched on some themes that are important themes of scripture that we should stand stand strong stand firm stand faithful stand in the battle zone that it is having done all to keep standing stand and keep on standing and that we shouldn't wait to stand for God we should stand now determined to stand today for Christ to stand and to be that kind of Christian soldier it's a call to action really that we all can consider tonight the Bible talks about how we should be not hearers only but doers of the word James 1 22 there's a work for everyone to do the work that is the church is the work for all of us we've all got a part to play every one of us here's what someone has put it as that sense of that call to action that is really across the board for all of us and it's called

I will do more I will do more than belong I will participate I will do more than care I will help I will do more than believe I will practice I will do more than be fair I will be kind I will do more than forgive I will encourage I will do more than earn I will enrich I will do more than teach I will inspire I will do more than give I will serve I will do more than live I will grow I will do more than be friendly I will be a friend how can we do more how can we stand and stand strong and stand stronger stand taller having done all to stand Be that godly man, that godly woman that he's called you to be.

And keep standing, standing strong, such that you'll finish well. This is not a sprint. It's a marathon event, isn't it? It's a walk with God. We walk with God, we get saved.

[30 : 07] We're saved, we've got heaven as our home. Yet there's more. There's still more. There's that walk that he wants us to walk. Our salvation is short, yet he wants us to be his workmanship.

He wants us to be his vessels to fill and to overflow, to use, to touch others. To have that daily walk with him. That we can finish strong.

So, once you're saved, that's just the beginning. Take up your cross daily. It's the cross before the crown. The cross before the crown is the thought that some have put in the sense that we'd all like to have a crown, but first we must seize the cross, embrace the cross as it were, your cross.

As a fellow pilgrim, what is the cross that he's called you to carry with your life as the soldier of the Lord? So stand fast with godly convictions.

It says in Philippians 1, 27 to close, that you stand fast in one spirit, striving together for the faith of the gospel.

[31 : 18] There's a sense where the standing is not just standing alone, but standing together. We're stronger together. We stand fast together, it says. Stand fast in one spirit, striving together for the faith of the gospel.

So, there's a wonderful blessing that comes as we resolve to be an active part of a fellowship of God's people, to be a contributor, to give our heart to it, and he'll pour out his spiritual blessings. And it says we're faithful, as we stand fast, stand in the gap and stand strong. Let us pray. Lord, we thank you that you are the one who issues that call, that you were looking, you were seeking a man to stand in the gap, to pray, to stand before you for the land.

We pray for our land of Australia, Lord. We pray we would stand up and be counted. Lord, that we'd stand strong as even it's an evil day, and we should be clothed with that spiritual armour.

Lord, we should stand, and having done all, to keep on standing. Lord, when the battle rages, help us to know it's not ours, it's yours.

[32 : 33] You've already won the battle, and we are more than conquerors through you that loved us. Lord, we pray there might be some encouragement here tonight, that each one can take some morsel of truth that they can act upon, that we won't just be hearers of the word, but doers of it.

Lord, that we'll say we'll stand now, not wait to stand, but stand now, determined to stand, and to stand even if it be as those that would not bow to the statue of Nebuchadnezzar, that we would be willing to burn rather than bow, that we'd rather stand than kneel to anything that's false or of the evil one, rather that we would stand, stand firm.

Lord, help us, Lord, we pray each one might have that personal trust, that as we trust you as our Lord and Saviour, we have that assurance that we have eternal life, not by any merit or doing of our own, but only because of your shed blood for us, that we can know your saving love today.

Lord, we pray each one might have that trust, that assurance of eternal life, and help us to walk in that, Lord, not to leave it there, but to walk the walk that you've called us to, to be strong and to be always abounding, always praying, always having that clear conscience, always being ready for giving the answer that you've called us to witness, always having that willingness to be led by your Spirit in this life that you've called us to live.

And encourage, Lord, each one, that we might all be exhorted together, exhorting one another, and encouraging one another. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Amen.

[34 : 22] Striving together for the faith of the Gospel. Stand fast in one spirit. Stand fast in one spirit.